MATERIALES DE ENSEÑANZA EN EXTENSION

Nº 11

MATERIALES DE ENSEÑANZA EN
EXTENSION

EE/21/62

Nº 11

PROGRAM BUILDING

Part of the Process of Extension

by

Dr. Joseph Di Franco
Extensionist

Published in English and Spanish

DEPARTAMENTO DE ECONOMIA Y EXTENSION
INSTITUTO INTERAMERICANO DE CIENCIAS AGRICOLAS
DE LA OEA - Turrialba, Costa Rica.

For additional copies of this and other booklets and pamphlets for Regional Services in Extension, please contact U.S. AID - Mission headquarters, or write to:

Department of Economics and Extension
Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences of the O.A.S.
Tropical Center for Research and Graduate Training
Turrialba, Costa Rica

This publication was prepared under the provisions of the Contract between the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Institute of Inter-American Affairs of the Agency for International Development (AID) of the United States Government.

Turrialba, Costa Rica
November, 1962

PROGRAM BUILDING - PART OF THE PROCESS OF EXTENSION

By

Dr. Joseph Di Franco

- - - - -

Program Planning

To discover needs.

To plan systematic action.

- o -

The entire extension process is fundamentally geared to bring about changes. This educational process is based upon helping people to improve their situation. In other words, to be based upon needs of rural people. To do something about needs of rural people we (extension workers) must therefore find out what these needs are.

Many needs may be obvious to us already, such as increased food production, better housing, better health, etc. And we may even go so far as to say, "Why wait?, Let's start immediately?" Herein lies the next strong element of the extension process: the people themselves must recognize these needs and must become interested enough to want to do something about them. Without their complete understanding the real and fundamental changes will not be permanent.

We are therefore confronted with the problem of not only exposing needs but helping people to recognize these needs too. And in many places of the world we find so many needs that we must establish priorities.

The extension service cannot tackle all needs at the same time. Nor can the people overcame all of their problems at once As much as we would like to do it this way, it cannot be done. Ecucation as we know is sometimes an agonizingly slow process for bringing change. (Usually it is the most permanent).

Priorities are necessary too, to put thing into a more logical sequence. To tackle a most obvious need many times could lead to failure until something was done about other conditions first. For example religious missionaries have accepted the fact that greater progress was made toward meeting their goals when something was first done about health and increased food supplies. So too in extension, we extension people also have learned that to advocate fertilizer (an obviour way to increase production) only led to further frustrations -- Who would furnish the fertilizer? Who could afford to buy? what happened to other beliefs of the people? Actually, some other needs had to be taken care of first.

Another important step in the extension process is that in all of the actions of extension workers, the people must be involved. How else can we truly educate? We know and accept this fundamental learning principle that people must believe what they are doing is important to themselves. This is one of the hardest tasks for extension workers to accomplish. Too many people believe that organizing committees, means involvement of people. Or they assume that inviting people to a meeting is involvement. This may be participation, but is not necessarily involvement. Involvement means that the people on the committees or attending extension activities have a personal part in decision-making. They must actually have done something to bring about the decision arrived at and have a definite part to play in the problem-solving activity.

This takes time, patience and skill, All successful extension workers have these qualities. This is the element that makes extension education a profession. Working with people requires training. Not everyone can be a teacher or an extension agent.

To discover needs is a two-fold activity: 1) The agent must gather facts and make abservations. 2) He must have people help evaluate facts and observations. Or another way to say it is to determine needs and priorities requires agent activity and people's activity.

But what comes next? Naturally action is necessary to do something about the problems. Here again changes if successful must be accepted by the people. To help them accept the changes they must believe in the actions necessary for the solutions of the problems. They must believe they can do something about them and must understand the necessary steps to solving their needs. This means they must be involved in the planning for action, and action must be planned with them in mind. This involves training people in skills and methods that will help them reach their goals. Sometimes the extension worker may need to encourage, sometimes he may need to be realistic in their limitations, but most important he must lead them. He must have a plan, but it must be a systematic plan.

A systematic plan again involves pre-planning, study, evaluation and organization. It does not just happen. Although there is no assurance that the best plans will always lead to success we do know that most successful programs are based on good planning.

The need for a systematic plan is also another reason why extension education requires training and not everyone can be a good extension worker.

The concepts of program planning and development can be learned. Unfortunately most of the concepts are very simple and seem very elementary. Many of us are prone to move too rapidly without learning and developing the skills required to do effective program planning.

We shall not condemn the county agents alone if they do poor program planning. Usually the blame should be on the administrators, and many cases on specialists and consultants. This may be a little unfair, but the emphasis here is hata again we too often pass on the ideas and recommendations of extension education without making sure that the extension workers we supervise really understand and learn

the skills of extension education. Without understanding and learning, they cannot put into practice successful program building efforts.

Actually, most successful extension agents learn to do systematic programming in the field after some frustrating experiences. We need to help people arrive at this frame of mind before they have too many failures.

The extension service must do some effective programming to determine the needs of their field agents and in turn develop a systematic plan to help them solve their problems. If administrators and supervisors, by their actions, involve agents to:

1) Collect, assemble, interpret factual background information;
2) Study the situation;
3) Help to discuss real needs;
4) Determine priorities;
5) Develop a systematic plan to fulfill needs;
6) Help them execute the plan;
7) Help them to periodically evaluate progress in reaching goals;
8) Revise objectives and goals in light of new circunstances;

in this kind of involvement, agents learn by doing. They practice the methods and skills. They learn the real meaning of the program planning concepts. They learn to work with people.

Perhaps we can add a clinching argument for systematic program planning. A plan developed with people becomes their plan, not the county agent's plan. They will help to make it successful. A program planned by the agent alone may only receive lip service from the people it is intended to help. And if it fails, who is to blame? the county agent, of course -- it was his ideas, his program. If it is the people's program and plan, they will share the failures.

Contrary to most opinions, extension education is not easy, but very few experiences are more rewarding than helping people help themselves.

---ooOoo---

PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS

Training Materials in Extension

#1 Extension Philisophy

#2 Evaluation in Extension

#3 Subject Matter Specialists in Extension: Roles, Problems, and Adjustments.

#4 Extension Organization: For Administration and for Program Development.

#5 Elements that Contributed to the Success of the United States Cooperative Extension Service.

#6 Local Leaders in Extension.

#7 A Collection of Principles and Guides.

#8 Pre-Requisites to Progress in Agriculture, Land, Labor, Capital, Knowledge.

#9 Coordination - The Key to Successful Extension Education Service.

#10 The United States Cooperative Extension Service

---ooOoo---

AID/EE/224/62